

Running head: FORMAL FEEDBACK ON JOB PERFORMANCE

Providing Formal Feedback on Job Performance, Is There a Way?

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed:_____

Abstract

The problem was that Rock Springs Fire Department (RSFD) personnel were not provided with formal feedback on their job performance, which may have resulted in inconsistent job performance. The purpose of this research was to identify beneficial methods in providing formal feedback on job performance. Using descriptive research, questions about available types of contemporary personal performance evaluation methods, performance evaluation methods being used regionally, and employer perceived value of using those methods were answered. The research was conducted using feedback instruments, semi-structured interviews, and literature research. Results showed that a comprehensive performance management system was one effective way of providing formal feedback on individual job performance. Recommendations were made to initiate a performance management system for RSFD personnel.

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Providing Formal Feedback on Job Performance, Is There a Way?

Introduction

Everybody wants to know how he or she is doing on the job. Communication is based on feedback and when a question is asked, a reply is normally expected. Employees are no exception. Two-way performance feedback may possibly be seen affecting the basic deficiency needs as outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. If basic needs such as safety, belonging, and esteem cannot be actualized then it can be surmised that self-actualization will not be attained (Maslow, 1954). Self-actualization in the work place might be viewed as quality job performance.

Providing firefighters feedback on job performance can direct them in being a successful part of their department. Feedback "...helps us learn from our mistakes, and the faster we learn, the faster we progress and grow" (Buckman, 2000, ¶1). When firefighters are not provided with feedback on how they compare to the norm, how can they be expected to recognize the need for job performance improvement. If employees have potential for inconsistent job performance, fire departments may in turn have a challenge in providing consistent customer service.

The Rock Springs Fire Department (RSFD) has 35 members and is located in Rock Springs, Wyoming. The problem is that RSFD personnel are provided with no formal feedback on their job performance, which may be resulting in inconsistent job performance.

The purpose of this research is to identify methods that could be beneficial in providing feedback to RSFD individuals on their job performance. Descriptive research

methodology will be used for this applied research project. The following research questions will be addressed:

1. What contemporary personal performance evaluation methods are available?
2. What personal performance evaluation methods are presently being used by regional organizations?
3. What value do regional organizations find in using personal performance evaluations?

Background and Significance

Rock Springs, Wyoming, is a city of approximately 21,000 people located on Interstate 80 in Southwestern Wyoming. For the past few years the city has been experiencing rapid growth due to the development of regional oil and gas resources. Some of the problems associated with this rapid growth are insufficient city infrastructure and strains on delivery of municipal services. The majority of the mineral severance taxes are funneled to state government, which leaves local governments struggling to cope with the financial aspects of local growth problems.

The RSFD is a career department employing 35 personnel to provide fire and life safety services out of three fire stations. Firefighters are trained to be multi-faceted. Fire suppression, medical first response with advanced life support engines, light and heavy rescue, and hazardous materials response services are provided to the community by the RSFD. The RSFD is also the host agency for the Wyoming Region 4, Regional Response Team. This team is responsible for responding to and assisting with mitigation of weapons of mass destruction and hazardous materials events in three Wyoming counties that cover approximately 20,000 square miles.

The RSFD responded to an average of 1,200 calls each year over the past 3 years. With the local growth, call volume has increased approximately to 1,450 calls in 2005.

The structure of the RSFD consists of a fire chief and three shifts each with a battalion chief, three captains, and seven firefighters. There is also a non-shift battalion chief over the Fire Prevention Division.

Supervision of daily operations is carried out using the chain of command with the written department *General Orders* providing guidance. The RSFD *General Orders* are comprehensive but in the process of revision. There is also a labor contract in force that is negotiated annually. All department positions have job descriptions, which were instituted after a citywide wage study was completed in 2000.

Written performance evaluations for probationary firefighters are conducted monthly. These evaluations have predetermined performance factors, which are graded on a numeric scale. There is also space for a narrative on performance factors if it is deemed necessary by the evaluator. After the firefighter's one year probationary period, no further performance evaluations are completed.

RSFD staff meetings, involving the fire chief and the four battalion chiefs, are held monthly to discuss pertinent issues. Information from these staff meetings is disseminated to the ranks through the use of shift meetings. When and how these shift meetings are presented is up to the individual battalion chiefs. Besides the probationary evaluations, these are the only formal meetings where performance issues are discussed. Even with the use of fire department staff meetings and shift meetings, the interpretation of the RSFD *General Orders*, labor contract, and individual job descriptions are to some extent individualistic.

Individual contributions to the mission of the department are diverse. The department has highly qualified personnel who have different comfort levels of participation. It is not unusual to see the same people involved in the various projects that take place. Conversely, it is not unusual to see the same people who are uninvolved. This has created an observable disparity in individual development and developmental opportunities for department members. If opportunities for development and individual participation in contributing to the department mission are inconsistent, then it might be possible that delivery of services to the customer could be impacted. Without a method to provide formal feedback on job performance, the organization's level of productivity may remain status quo.

With the increased call volume there is observable reluctance by some to give any more than is asked. As projected community growth continues, lack of consistency in individual job performance may degrade the delivery of departmental services unless some solution is initiated. Formalized feedback on job performance at all levels may be one way of achieving this.

The Teams Unit of the National Fire Academy Executive Development course listed "methods for monitoring individual performance and providing feedback" as one of the four components of an effective team structure (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2004, p. SM 2-9). This applied research project will study whether providing formal feedback can be an aid in bringing consistency to individual job performance. Consistency in the individual job performance of firefighters supports the operational objective of the United States Fire Administration to "reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters" (NFA, 2003, p. II-2).

Literature Review

A literature review was completed that focused on the three research questions:

(a) What contemporary personal performance evaluation methods are available? (b) What personal performance evaluation methods are presently being used by regional organizations? (c) What value do regional organizations find in using personal performance evaluations?

1. In researching contemporary personal performance evaluation methods the question arises as to where and how they were developed. Although several methods of personal performance evaluations have been used since the beginning of time, many workplace strategies now declared as new began in the mid-1800s (Parks, 1995). Performance evaluations as a management tool came about years later as mainly a pay for performance concept (DeNisi and Griffin, 2001).

In the 1950s Peter Drucker's idea of Management by Objective and Douglas McGregor's book *The Human Side of Enterprise*, which introduced his ideas of Theory X and Theory Y, gained a lot of attention. Today's performance appraisal procedures have grown from the work of Drucker and McGregor (Grote, 2002).

Management by Objectives was one of several types of performance evaluations found in the literature review. This type of evaluation involves supervisors and employees jointly setting objectives on what the employee should accomplish, how well it should be done, and when it should be done. Objectives are set to reflect organizational goals and objectives (Armstrong and Appelbaum, 2003).

Graphic Scale Appraisal systems involve having a stated performance factor. The evaluator marks points on a numeric scale associated with the performance factor that

best describes the employee. There usually is a comments section where specifics can help to validate the rating (Armstrong and Appelbaum, 2003).

The Narrative Method of performance evaluation involves a written assessment of the performance of an employee. The Narrative Method is flexible in that it can be used with or without a standard form and may be written about any type of performance. It can be focused on one type of behavior or have predetermined categories. It may have a numerical rating system that is a part of the evaluation, but the narrative would be the focus of the evaluation (Bacal, 2004).

Critical Incident Appraisals are focused on key behaviors that are job related. This method involves documenting important events where the employee either performed well or at a substandard level. The recording process may use forms or other methods that have categories to maintain the consistency in documentation (Bacal, 2004).

Checklist Appraisals are forms that list behavioral descriptions. The evaluator has a choice of determining if the employee did or did not meet the behavioral expectation. Sometimes the items are weighted to reflect importance (Armstrong and Appelbaum, 2003).

Forced-Choice Appraisals involve choosing between two or more statements. The evaluator chooses the statement that best describes the employee's behavior (Armstrong and Appelbaum, 2003).

360 Degree Feedback appraisals involve collecting performance information from all directions. Supervisors, peers, subordinates, customers, and possibly others would provide input on job performance. Usually, these observations are collected using a ratings method (Coens and Jenkins, 2002).

The literature review found several subsets of the preceding methods and systems. Several advantages and disadvantages for all of the methods were also noted.

Bacal (2004) emphasized that performance reviews are only one part of a larger system known as a performance management system. Bacal went on to describe a performance management system as an ongoing process where clear and mutual understanding of the employee's job description and performance objectives is aligned with the company's mission and goals. Once there is a consensus or understanding of how the employee can benefit the organization a mutual plan is developed which identifies ways to enhance employee performance and overcome any obstacles to the desired objectives. An understanding is also reached on how performance levels will be measured.

Grote (2002) outlined the four steps to a performance management as Performance Planning, Performance Execution, Performance Assessment, and Performance Review. During Performance Planning objectives, standards, goals, and results are identified. Then the competencies, behaviors, skills, performance, and factors are identified on how to attain them. In the Performance Execution phase the employee works on attaining his goals while the supervisor provides support and motivation. A midterm review is generally provided during the Performance Execution phase. During the Performance Assessment phase a determination of how well the employee has performed and the performance evaluation is completed. In the final phase, the Performance Review phase, a meeting between employee and supervisor is held to review the employee's past year's performance and the success of the plan that was developed. This is also where a date is set to create next years performance plan.

Another philosophy is that performance appraisals like Grote outlined should be abolished. Instead a Performance Development Plan should be developed where the goal is not to rate performance but to promote alignment of expectations and goals. These methods are based on trust in employees, coaching, and open dialogue (Coens and Jenkins, 2002).

2. Of the information that was found during the literature review on performance evaluation methods that are presently being used by regional organizations it appears most are part of a performance management system. The *Personnel Rules of the Executive Branch of the Wyoming State Government* (2001) requires employees to be evaluated twice in their annual probationary period and annually thereafter. The performance management system used identifies performance standards as part of the Performance Planning phase. The other phases include a mid-term review and an appraisal interview. If it is identified that an employees work needs improvement, a work improvement plan is developed and followed up ninety days later with a reappraisal of needs improvement. Specific agency forms are referenced for documentation.

The University of Wyoming *Information Circular 2002-2* (2002) establishes guidelines for conducting performance evaluations for staff employees at least annually. While there are no set specific steps outlined for the process, general guidelines are established that are consistent with other performance management systems. The agency employee evaluation form that is specified for use also uses a weighted rating system. This performance evaluation tool appears similar to the Graphic Scale Appraisal system.

The *Wyoming Education Code* (1969) requires boards of trustees of each school district to perform written performance evaluation on teachers annually. In a study

prepared for the Wyoming Department of Education, Dr. Carol Ann Watson identified setting clear goals and objectives, defining effective teaching, and teacher rating focusing on professional growth as effective practices of teacher evaluation systems (Watson, 1998). Watson also stated that constant monitoring of performance should be occurring and, when deficiencies in performance were identified, that mentoring be used to correct the deficiency and enhance professional development.

3. During the literature review, the value regional organizations find in using personal performance evaluations was occasionally identified in the agency's policy. The University of Wyoming policy was designed "so that employees are aware of what is expected of them; receive timely feedback about their performance; receive opportunities for education, training career development, and promotional opportunities; receive recognition in a fair manner" (*Information Circular 2002-2*, 2002, Purpose section). Other potential uses of the performance reviews that were identified included wage increases and possible disciplinary actions (*Information Circular 2002-2*, 2002).

The University of Wyoming formed a staff performance evaluation committee in 2000. The purpose of this group was to evaluate the relationship between performance evaluations and merit raises. In its report the committee stated that performance evaluations were useful for both developmental and administrative purposes. It also noted that performance planning worked well for individual development as a developmental portion of a performance management process (*Staff Performance Evaluation*, 2000).

The State of Wyoming includes clarification of performance standards, expectations and goals as part of goals of their performance appraisals. Brian Foster, the Human Resource Director for the State of Wyoming, stated that Wyoming's managers

sometimes create inadequate employee evaluations because there is not enough money to reward employees. He sees his department struggling with that viewpoint and is trying to get his managers to comprehend there is more value to the performance evaluation process than just pay raises (Barrett, Greene, Patton, and Keeling (2005).

In summary, the Literature Review revealed numerous types of performance evaluations. While different in how they are conducted, they are all geared at providing feedback to the employee. Several of the sources suggested that in order for performance evaluations to be effective they should be associated with some form of performance management system. By using a performance management system, feedback on job performance would be more apt to be an ongoing process and not just an annual event.

All of the regional organizations that were examined in the Literature Review were using some form of performance evaluation to provide feedback on individual job performance. The regional organization's perceived value of using performance evaluations to provide feedback on individual job performance ranged from justification for merit raises to individual development. Performance expectations for employees were also cited as a value of providing feedback on job performance.

The literature review validates that providing feedback on individual job performance can assist in aligning job performance with organizational goals and objectives. The literature review also bears out that further information needs to be collected from regional fire based organizations to assist in reaching a comprehensive conclusion of the possible methods and potential benefits of providing formal feedback to individuals of the RSFD to increase the consistency of individual job performance.

Procedures

Qualitative research was conducted in an attempt to answer the three research questions. The Wyoming Libraries Database was used to search all libraries in the state of Wyoming for material to conduct a literature examination. Pertinent reports, policies, and documents to the literature review were ferreted out using the Yahoo and Google Internet search engines. The literature examination was instrumental in answering research question one and is detailed in the literature review.

Research question two and research question three were designed to find information from the regional area, specifically Wyoming. The sparse population of Wyoming created a complication in obtaining an adequate survey sample size. Therefore, a feedback instrument was developed to help answer research questions two and three. A sample of this feedback instrument may be found in Appendix A.

On November 7, 2005 this feedback instrument was emailed to the 10 municipal fire departments, county fire departments, and fire districts in Wyoming who have eight or more career employees. It was requested that either the chief or a chief officer of the department fill out the feedback instrument and return it within two weeks. Requesting either the chief or a chief officer of the department to fill out the feedback instrument was an attempt to gather information from persons who would be knowledgeable and actively involved with their performance management system.

During the week of December 12, 2005, the author conducted semi-structured telephone interviews to follow up with the fire agencies that did not return the feedback instrument. To guide the discussion, the chief or a chief officer of those departments was asked questions from the same feedback instrument that was emailed on November 7,

2005. The respondent's answers and written notes were written on the feedback forms to document their reply. Each agencies response to the feedback instrument and the semi-structured interviews were then summarized by question.

One of the limitations to this research project was the limited number of municipal fire departments, county fire departments, and fire districts in Wyoming who have eight or more career employees. Another limitation was that the feedback instrument asked questions which might have been too subjective in nature. The assumption that the respondents of the feedback instrument were actually in a position of using performance evaluations and having an opinion on the merits and detractions of using said instruments could be viewed as a limitation of this research.

One other limitation to this research was the absence of published research information related to the types of personal performance evaluation methods being used by regional organizations and the value found in those methods by the regional organizations. This was compounded by no published research information on the topic pertaining to regional fire organizations.

Definition of Terms

A feedback instrument is a questionnaire that is used to gather information on a topic. The feedback instrument does not gather the required sample to be considered a survey.

Semi-structured interviews are interviews that have predetermined fields or questions with which to gather information. They are more subjective in nature than surveys in that they allow for more varied input or opinions.

Results

1. What contemporary personal performance evaluation methods are available?

Performance evaluations can be traced back several hundred, if not thousands, of years. In the mid 1950s, when behavioral science came into eminence, the beginnings of modern performance evaluations began to take form as they took into account morale and self-esteem as performance motivators (Armstrong and Applebaum, 2003). Today several varieties of performance evaluation styles are being used. The majority of these styles appear to be linked to some type of a formal management system.

Evaluating the employee's performance in the organization is the premise for a performance evaluation and is usually conducted by the employee's immediate supervisor (Grote, 2002). A performance period is usually specified and an evaluation date set. The procedures usually call for the supervisor to fill out the organization's evaluation document that evaluates the employee on specified performance factors and then discuss the results with the employee. Some of the common contemporary personal performance evaluation methods that were discovered in the research include Graphic Scale Appraisal, Narrative Appraisals, Critical Incident Appraisals, Checklist Appraisals, Forced Choice Appraisals and 360 Degree Feedback.

In a formal management system the appraisals are only a segment in an ongoing process (Bacal & Grote, 2002, 2004). This process starts with Performance Planning. Performance Planning is where the employer and employee reach consensus on organizational goals, expectations of the employee's contribution to those goals, and determining the objectives of how, what, and when that will be accomplished. Understanding of how the employee will be evaluated is also clarified in Performance

Planning. Ongoing communication throughout the evaluation period is essential to ensuring that the goals and objectives set forward during Performance Planning are intact and provides for adjustments as needed. It also lets the employee know how they are performing on a continuing basis. Observation and documentation of performance factors during the evaluation period provides for discussions based on the concrete aspects of performance during the evaluation meeting. The performance review meeting is where the employer and employee meet to discuss and review performance. A performance evaluation or performance appraisal document is generally formulated for, or from, this meeting.

Several sources found in the literature review underlined factors that help performance evaluations to be effective. Armstrong and Applebaum (2003) pointed out that in order for employees to buy in to the concept of performance evaluations, they must first be educated on the process and the benefits of using performance evaluations.

Training of the personnel who are performing the performance evaluations helps to ensure consistency, fairness, and effectiveness (Grote, 2002). Evaluators must have on going communication with the employees that they are evaluating to ensure that there are no “hidden agendas” (Bacal, 2004).

Performance evaluations should be a shared responsibility with joint ownership. It should be a process of ongoing feedback throughout the year. There should also be ongoing documentation through the year to help provide an accurate picture of the employee’s performance at evaluation time (Armstrong and Applebaum, 2003; Bacal, 2004; Grote, 2002; Margrave and Gorden, 2001).

2. What personal performance evaluation methods are presently being used by regional organizations? Performance evaluations are part of a performance management system according to the *Personnel Rules of the Executive Branch of the Wyoming State Government* (2001). The State of Wyoming's performance management system identifies performance standards, performance planning, ongoing reviews, and an appraisal as key components to its system.

The University of Wyoming's performance evaluations are done annually but little guidance is provided on a performance management system (*Information Circular 2002-2*, 2002). Constant monitoring throughout the performance management process with mentoring used to correct deficiencies was identified as a format for enhancing professional development for Wyoming school teachers (Watson, 1998).

A feedback instrument was developed as part of the applied research project. This instrument was sent to the 10 Wyoming fire departments that have eight or more career employees. These departments were municipal, county, or fire district entities. Of those ten departments, four completed and returned the feedback instrument.

Semi-structured interviews were then completed to follow up with the departments that did not return the feedback instrument. To guide the discussion, interviewees were asked questions from the same feedback instrument that was previously emailed. A sample of the feedback instrument is provided in Appendix A and the names of the departments and respondents are provided in Appendix B. Information from the feedback instrument and semi-structured interviews is summarized in Appendix C.

The information that is summarized in Appendix C shows that eight of the 10 departments are currently providing formal feedback on individual job performance to all employees. Six of the 10 organizations are providing that feedback on an annual basis while two are providing feedback more often.

There were five of the 10 organizations using some form of Graphic Scale Appraisal system where the employees are scored on predetermined fields and a narrative is used to support the score. The summary also showed two of the 10 departments using Narrative Appraisals to document performance factors.

3. What value do regional organizations find in using personal performance evaluations? Margrave and Gorden, (2001) listed knowing expectations, knowing each other, trust, increased job performance, and proactive problem solving as advantages of regular feedback. The State of Wyoming and the University of Wyoming include professional development, increased job performance, and accountability as part of the benefits of performance evaluations. Both of these organizations are also using performance evaluations to assist with merit raises (*Personnel Rules*, 2001; *Information Circular 2002-2*, 2002).

Question number 5 on the feedback instrument and semi-structured interviews asked if the organization believed there was value in providing feedback on individual job performance. Nine of ten responded to the affirmative while one department did not respond.

Question number 5 of the feedback instrument and semi-structured interviews went on to ask what the organization would list as some of the benefits of providing feedback on individual job performance. Communication was an area of benefit listed in

the responses. One respondent stated that it was an opportunity to let the employee know what their image was as viewed by the department. Another responded that it allowed for open communication and alignment with department objectives while yet another believed it was away of building awareness from both sides.

All respondents identified performance evaluations as a method of increasing individual job performance. Some said identifying weaknesses and building on strengths accomplished this. Four of the 10 respondents stated that performance evaluations were a tool that could be used for personal growth or development.

Discussion

Modern personal performance evaluations could possibly be categorized as either an event or as part of a process. Personal performance evaluations that might be categorized into events are evaluations that could to be timed either as an annual occurrence or as a reaction to a positive or negative critical incident. Examples found that fall into this category were: (a) Graphic Scale Appraisals, (b) Narrative Appraisals, (c) Critical Incident Appraisals, (d) Check List Appraisals, (e) Forced Choice Appraisals, and (f) 360 Degree Feedback Appraisals. These performance evaluations may have the elements of goal setting, objectives, and acknowledgement of expectations. Most of these performance evaluation systems are dependant on follow up observation and ongoing documentation.

Personal performance evaluations that could be categorized as part of a process are evaluations that involve specific steps that are planned and timed so as to coordinate organizational and personal goals and objectives by enhancing personal development and

performance. Examples found that fall into this category were: (a) Management by Objectives, (b) Performance Management, and (c) Performance Development Plans.

The research suggests that of the regional organizations that were looked at who are performing personal performance evaluations, the majority are performing those evaluations as an annual or programmed occurrence. Grote (2002) advocated that those organizations that use performance evaluations effectively are using the performance evaluations as part of an ongoing process. This process involves the steps of Performance Planning, Performance Execution, Performance Assessment, and Performance Review. Armstrong and Applebaum (2003) added that performance appraisals can go off track if there have been no mini-reviews or feedback during the evaluation period.

Evaluation of the literature review and information gathered from the research brought to light several important constants: (a) Personal performance evaluations should be made a part of a performance management system. (b) Personal performance evaluations must be planned for and not be a reactionary annual event. (c) Employees must have a firm perspective of what the organizational goals are. Once those organizational goals are identified the employee must understand what, when, and how the expectations are for their contributions towards those goals. (d) Ongoing communication is a must.

Bacal (2004) wrote that the primary function of performance appraisals is to improve performance and not to find someone to blame for past actions. Bacal went on to clarify that performance is the level to which an employee contributes to the goals of the organization. Coens and Jenkins (2002) put forward that performance evaluations should

be designed so that strengths are identified. Once these strengths are identified, a personal development plan should be built around the strengths that contribute to the goals and objectives of the organization.

Information gathered from regional organizations (Appendix C) coincides with Coens and Jenkins findings. Several of the regional organizations are using performance evaluations as a platform to identify personal strengths and use that information to assist in developing personal development strategies.

The literature review and the research tend to support that personal performance evaluations do have value by providing feedback to the employee to increase consistency in individual job performance. Both the organization and the individual may benefit from the use of personal performance evaluations. By having a communicated understanding of the organizational goals and objectives, both sides should have a clear understanding of what the supporting expectations are. Individual strengths that support the organizational goals and objectives may be identified through performance evaluations, and then those strengths can be enhanced with personal development programs. Through ongoing dialogue both the employer and the employee can track progress, give and receive feedback, and adjust personal development strategies as needed. Ongoing feedback on individual job performance also allows for reinforcing positive performance behaviors and correcting deficient performance behaviors to keep performance on track.

Fire Departments, like most organizations, need their organizational goals and objectives supported by their employees in order to be successful. Employees need feedback if they are expected to know how they are performing for the organization. Organizations may possibly provide that feedback as part of a performance management

system. The RSFD might be successful at supporting consistency in individual job performance by providing feedback through the use of personal performance evaluations as part of a performance management system.

Recommendations

It is difficult to ascertain or measure consistency in personal job performance. There are many factors in individual perceptions of accomplishment or lack of accomplishment. Communication on expectations followed by feedback on an individual's performance weighed against those expectations appears to be a logical step to bring about consistency in individual job performance. Initiating a performance management system would be one step towards communicating those expectations and providing that feedback.

If a performance management system is to be set up in the RSFD certain events must precede its implementation. A review of the RSFD *General Orders* and RSFD job descriptions should be implemented. These documents along with the labor contract with Firefighters Local 1499, International Association of Firefighters are the basis for the expectations that are put upon employees to support the RSFD organizational goals and objectives. Once reviewed, a reoccurring time frame should be established for the review of these documents.

A performance management system should be set up with a focus on identifying the strengths of the employees that are supportive of the RSFD organizational goals and objectives. Once these strengths are identified a performance development program should be initiated as part of the performance management system so that those employee strengths might be developed.

The performance management system should be built to be an ongoing communication process between the employee and their immediate supervisor that establishes clear expectations and understanding about job performance and how that performance will be evaluated. Identifying ways that supervisors and employees can work together to maintain, advance, or build on current employee performance should be reviewed along with obstructions to performance and possible measures to remove those obstructions.

A four-phase model, similar to one used by several organizations, should be the pattern for the performance management system. These phases are Performance Planning, Performance Execution, Performance Assessment, and Performance Review. Prior to conducting the first phase, the manager and the employee should review the employee's job description, the RSFD *General Orders* and the labor contract to facilitate understanding departmental goals, objectives, and performance expectations.

In the first phase, Performance Planning, the manager and employee would meet to discuss what the employee would accomplish over the next year. This discussion should include the employee's key job responsibilities, the goals and projects the employee will work on, and how the employee will perform the job. The employee's individual development plans should also be discussed in this meeting.

Performance Execution is the second phase in which the employee works to accomplish the goals, objectives, and key responsibilities of the job. This phase is where it is instrumental for the manager to provide mentoring and feedback to the individual. The manager should help to provide a supportive atmosphere that will help the employee accomplish their goals, objectives, and key responsibilities. Frequent informal reviews of

the employee's performance should be conducted and compared to the employee's performance plan.

In the third phase, Performance Assessment, the manager would gather and organize the information that has been collected on how well the employee has performed. This information should then be transferred to a form that is used to document the employee's performance. In the development of this form, it is recommended that it be organization specific and is geared to the employee's performance development. Once the documentation form has been filled out, the appraiser's supervisor should then review the form.

The Performance Review is the fourth phase in the performance management system. This is a formal meeting where the manager and the employee review what the manager has written and discuss the employee's performance over the evaluation period. The employee should be able to add written comments to the evaluation form if they feel that there are items that need explanation or if there is disagreement. Both the manager and the employee should sign the form stating that the meeting was conducted. A copy of the form should be given to the employee and a copy should be put into the employee's personnel file. After the Performance Review a date should be set within the next few weeks to start the process over with a Performance Planning meeting.

A key component of implementing the performance management system into the department is educating all members of the department on the process. The education process should include who will be evaluated, what the purpose of the program is, and how the performance management system works. Part of the education process should be training both evaluators and those being evaluated on how to perform the evaluations.

After the implementation of a performance management system to provide feedback on individual job performance, ongoing evaluation as to the effectiveness of its purpose should be accomplished. The ongoing attainment of organizational goals and objectives, alignment of employee performance with those organizational objectives and goals, and development of employee strengths that are supportive of the organizational goals and objectives should gauge this effectiveness.

Consistency in individual job performance has many influences and providing formal feedback is only one of those influences. Individual development, organizational development, cultural factors of internal groups, and leadership are a few of the other influences. Future research on these topics may also give insight on how to assist with consistency in individual job performance.

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Appendix A

Formal Feedback on Job Performance, Is There a Way?

Feedback Instrument

Chief:

I am currently working on an applied research project, which is part of the learning experience of the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program. The research that I am conducting involves identifying methods that could be beneficial in providing feedback to fire department individuals on their job performance. The part of the research that you could help me with is determining if departments, such as yours, are using any form of formal feedback on individual job performance and if they are, the perceived value of doing so.

I would appreciate it if you, or one of your chief officers, could take the time out of your busy schedule to complete the attached feedback instrument and return it to me. I would appreciate it if you could have the instrument returned to me by November 26, 2005. If you would be interested in the summary of these feedback instruments, or a copy of the completed applied research project, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Lyle Armstrong

Battalion Chief

Rock Springs Fire Department

- 1) Does your organization use any type of formal feedback on individual job performance and if so, how often is it used?
- 2) If your organization is providing formal feedback on job performance, how is it being accomplished?
- 3) If your organization is providing formal feedback on job performance, is it documented and where is the documentation maintained?
- 4) If your organization is maintaining documentation of formal feedback on job performance, what are some of the ways the documentation/information is used?
- 5) Do you believe that there is a value in providing formal feedback on individual job performance and if so, what would you list as some of the benefits?
- 6) Do you believe that there are any drawbacks in providing formal feedback on individual job performance and if so, what would you list as some of the drawbacks?
- 7) If you are using a performance management system, is it specific to your department or is it being used for a broader organization?
- 8) Does your department have written job descriptions and if so, how often are they reviewed or updated?
- 9) Does your department have written standard operating procedures and if so, how often are they reviewed or updated?
- 10) Does your department have any other form of written personnel policies that individuals are expected to adhere to and if so, what type?

Appendix B

Selected Wyoming Fire Organizations with Eight or More Career Personnel

| Department | Name |
|---|-------------------------------|
| <hr/> | |
| Campbell County Fire Department | Ron Smith, Asst. Chief |
| Casper Fire Department | Dale Anderson, Division Chief |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | Scott Alvord, Chief |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | Christy Carlson, Captain |
| Laramie Fire Department | Brett Vance, Division Chief |
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Clyde Young, Chief |
| Rawlins Fire Department | Scott Hannum, Chief |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Brad Sarff, Chief |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Patrick Reitz, Chief |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Gary Valentine, Chief |

Appendix C

Summary of Responses to Feedback Instrument

1. Does your organization use any type of formal feedback on individual job performance and if so, how often is it used?

| Department | Response |
|---|--|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Yes, annually |
| Casper Fire Department | Yes, annually |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | No |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | Yes, first year – semi-annually, annually thereafter |
| Laramie Fire Department | Yes, written annually, verbal four months before and four months after written |
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Yes, first year – semi-annually, quarterly thereafter |
| Rawlins Fire Department | Yes, annually |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Yes, first year – semi-annually, none thereafter |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Yes, annually |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Yes, annually |

2. If your organization is providing formal feedback on job performance, how is it being accomplished?

| Department | Response |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Compilation of self-evaluation and supervisor's evaluation, results tied to a scoring system |
| Casper Fire Department | Graphic scale appraisal using four point scoring scale augmented with narrative |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | Not done |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | One on one meeting where there is a consolidation of self-evaluation and supervisor's evaluation and documented using a graphic scale appraisal with three point scoring scale augmented with narrative |
| Laramie Fire Department | Employee given list of expectations in addition to job description. One on one meeting where goals are evaluated and a written form is filled out. In addition, verbal evaluations twice per year. |

| Department | Response |
|---|---|
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Checklist evaluations augmented with comments section |
| Rawlins Fire Department | Written evaluation discussed during a meeting |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Monthly graphic scale appraisals with narrative during first year for recruits |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Not stated |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Graphic scale appraisal using four point scoring scale augmented with narrative |

3. If your organization is providing formal feedback on job performance, is it documented and where is the documentation maintained?

| Department | Response |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Yes, department personnel file |
| Casper Fire Department | Yes, department personnel file |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | Not done |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | Yes, department personnel file |
| Laramie Fire Department | Yes, city personnel file |

| Department | Response |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Yes, department personnel file |
| Rawlins Fire Department | Yes, city personnel file |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Yes, training file |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Yes, city personnel file |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Yes, department personnel file |

4. If your organization is maintaining documentation of formal feedback on job performance, what are some of the ways the documentation/information is used?

| Department | Response |
|---|--|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Merit based raises |
| Casper Fire Department | Individual growth tool |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | Not used |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | Pay increases, individual improvement, goal setting |
| Laramie Fire Department | Evaluate trends, evaluate goal attainment, possibly used in disciplinary actions |
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Increasing personal performance |

| Department | Response |
|--|--|
| Rawlins Fire Department | Merit pay increases, evaluate goal attainment |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Evaluate recruit's personal performance |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Annual pay raises |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Individual development, promotions, and discipline |

5. Do you believe that there is a value in providing formal feedback on individual job performance and if so, what would you list as some of the benefits?

| Department | Response |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Yes, improve performance and personal development tool |
| Casper Fire Department | Yes, identify weaknesses and build strengths, growth tool |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | Yes, cognizance and accountability of actions, opportunity to mentor and develop employee, modify unacceptable behavior |

| Department | Response |
|---|---|
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | Yes, acknowledgement of needs and perceptions, builds awareness |
| Laramie Fire Department | Yes, defines expectation of employees future development, formal record of progress toward those expectations, formal method to relay the employees image in the eyes of the department |
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Yes, identifies weaknesses and can help individual performance |
| Rawlins Fire Department | Yes, recognizes superior performance and helps improve less than standard performance |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Yes, lets expectations be known and if those expectations are not met, tool for discussion |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Not answered |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Yes, open communication and alignment with department objectives |

6. Do you believe that there are any drawbacks in providing formal feedback on individual job performance and if so, what would you list as some of the drawbacks?

| Department | Response |
|---|---|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Yes, sometimes individuals expect something that is not earned |
| Casper Fire Department | Yes, evaluators must be trained, must be buy in to the process |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | No, organization must monitor process and sure it is applied equally |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | No |
| Laramie Fire Department | Yes, stress during appraisals, must see that it is for personal growth not a “hammer” |
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | No |
| Rawlins Fire Department | Yes, everyone produces at evaluation time and maybe not the whole year, sometimes uses past performance to cover current poor performance |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Yes, must be consistency on performing evaluations, must be consistent on expectations |

| Department | Response |
|--|---|
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Not answered |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Yes, dependent on person doing evaluation, must not get tunnel vision on current or past behavior |

7. If you are using a performance management system, is it specific to your department or is it being used for a broader organization?

| Department | Response |
|---|--|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Specific to department, required by county |
| Casper Fire Department | Specific to department |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | Not answered |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | County system |
| Laramie Fire Department | City system |
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Specific to department |
| Rawlins Fire Department | City system |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Specific to department |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Not answered |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Specific to department |

8. Does your department have written job descriptions and if so, how often are they reviewed or updated?

| Department | Response |
|---|---|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Yes, as needed or with a job vacancy |
| Casper Fire Department | Yes, no more than every five years |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | Yes, as needed |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | Yes, annually |
| Laramie Fire Department | Yes, as needed or every five to 10 years |
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Yes, as needed |
| Rawlins Fire Department | Yes, when pay scale is altered |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Yes, as needed |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Not answered |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Yes, reviewed annually and changed when Needed |

9. Does your department have written standard operating procedures and if so, how often are they reviewed or updated?

| Department | Response |
|---|---|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Yes, reviewed annually, changed as needed |
| Casper Fire Department | Yes, every few years or as needed |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | Yes, ongoing process |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | Yes, ongoing process |
| Laramie Fire Department | Yes, ongoing process |
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Yes, as needed or directed by board |
| Rawlins Fire Department | Yes, ongoing process or when a problem arises |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Yes, ongoing process or as needed |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Not answered |
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Yes, reviewed annually changed as needed |

10. Does your department have any other form of written personnel policies that individuals are expected to adhere to and if so, what type?

| Department | Response |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Campbell County Fire Department | Yes, county policies, operational policies, primary and secondary job descriptions |

| Department | Response |
|---|--|
| Casper Fire Department | Standard operating procedures, job descriptions, union contract |
| Cheyenne Fire and Rescue | Civil service rules and regulations, labor agreement, department rules and regulations, city rules and regulations |
| Jackson Hole Fire/EMS | County personnel policy, department standard operation procedures, department personnel policy |
| Laramie Fire Department | Union contract, city employee handbook |
| Natrona County Fire Protection District | Standard operation procedures, job descriptions |
| Rawlins Fire Department | Civil service rules and regulations, standard operation procedures, city employee policy manual, volunteer by- |
| Rock Springs Fire Department | Standard operating procedures, job descriptions, union contract, chiefs' directions |
| Sheridan Fire-Rescue | Not Answered |

| Department | Response |
|--|---|
| Rock Springs/Sweetwater County Airport | Personnel manual, drug and alcohol policy, security manuals, operations plan |
